TESTIMONY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES CONSERVATION
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The Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) was authorized in 1947 by Act of Congress of the United States of America granting consent and approval to an Interstate Compact. It is one of three Interstate Commissions dedicated to resolving fishery issues.

The Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission is composed of five member states: Alaska, California, Idaho, Oregon and Washington. While the Commission has no regulatory or management authority, it was created to provide collective participation by states to work on mutual problems of the fisheries resource. The Commission's principal office is located in Portland, Oregon.

The goal of the Commission is to promote and support policies and actions directed at the conservation, development and management of fishery resources of mutual concern to the member states through a coordinated regional approach to research, monitoring and utilization.

An objective of the Commission is to facilitate interjurisdictional fishery agreements and coordinate information. The Commission holds a non-voting seat on both the Pacific Fishery Management Council and the North Pacific Fishery Management Council.

The Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission regularly serves as a primary contractor on grants, projects, and contracts for States and other organizations because of its proven ability and low overhead. Generally, the Commission exerts no programmatic or policy control over these projects but provides administrative support in the form of payroll, procurement, accounting, travel arrangements and contract monitoring.

PACIFIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION
PROJECTS

Pacific Fisheries Information Network (PacFIN)
The Pacific Fisheries Information Network provides timely and accurate data essential for effective management. Catch and value data for all commercial species landed in Washington, Oregon, and California are provided to a central database. The nation's first regional fisheries data network, PacFIN provides information enabling agencies and the fishing industry to track commercial fish catches, and to manage and plan more effectively.

The PacFIN central database includes fish-ticket and vessel registration data provided by the Washington, Oregon and California (WOC) state fishery agencies. In addition the WOC data sources supply species-composition and catch-by-area proportions developed from their port sampling and trawl logbook data systems.

The NOAA Fisheries/NW Region supplies the central database with limited-entry permit data and the US Coast Guard vessel data is also incorporated. The NOAA Fisheries/Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) inputs weekly aggregates developed from their tow-by-tow observer database.

The data for Alaska groundfish fishery are provided by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) and the NOAA Fisheries/AKR in the form of monthly and weekly aggregate data.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada also makes a contribution to this West Coast Fisheries

Data System.

The best estimates of catch for each groundfish species by month, area, and gear-type are developed from the source data above mentioned. This information is provided to the Pacific Fishery Management Council for its management purposes.

Alaska Fisheries Information Network (AKFIN)
The Alaska Fisheries Information Network reports harvest and value from commercial fisheries in Alaska using the best available data from the data source agencies. AKFIN combines all state and federal data using consistent methods. Once data are integrated, AKFIN reports information from several critical perspectives necessary to decide impacts of changes in fishery management. These include species, area, gear, vessel, processor, community and fishery participants by season. Data sets and reports are provided under memorandum of agreement to agency analysts, economists, biologists and managers. Published data are screened to protect the confidential and financial status of entities.

AKFIN prepares non-confidential reports of annual Alaska harvests for:
• Fisheries of the United States- FUS
• Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission –PSMFC
• Pacific Fisheries Information Network – PacFIN
• North Pacific Anadromous Fisheries Commission – NPAFC

Recreational Fisheries Information Network (RecFIN)
The Recreational Fisheries Information Network coordinates field sampling and directed phone surveys to collect Pacific Coast Marine Recreational Fisheries catch and effort data. This program documents ocean fishery impacts on the salmon and marine fish resources. This program estimates total ocean sport effort by boat type (charter and private) and interviews are conducted randomly of ocean boats to generate estimates of catch for both salmon and non-salmon species. All sampled salmon are examined for the presence of a coded wire tag. Additional biological data are collected from all fish species. Anglers are also interviewed regarding released fish species.

Catch per boat data and angler counts are collected at least several days a week, including all weekends and holidays in all major ports. Anglers are interviewed at boat ramps, moorages and charterdocks. Catch is sampled for species, fin marks, scales, lengths and some weight. Charterboat effort in most ports is estimated by contacting charter offices for their count of boat trips by trip type.

Sample rates vary, but the overall goal is 20% of all ocean trips. In Oregon and Washington the average coastwide sampling rate is typically within the range of 35-45% of the angler effort.

In 2003 the West Coast embarked on a new program to address the concerns of the Marine Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS) phone survey program. With additional funding for California we developed a sampling program similar to Washington and Oregon. California has some unique differences from those states related to the number of boat launch sites and the number of private marinas. Private and rental boat fishing will be covered by using three surveys based on the types of access points. Charterboat efforts are gathered by telephone surveys to charterboat offices. Onboard observers survey of passengers is used to collect angler and catch data.

Fisheries Economic Data Program
The Fisheries Economics Data Program is a cooperative data collection effort to address the needs of fisheries managers and industry for economic data and information on the West Coast and in Alaska.

This project is part of a Cooperative Agreement with the NOAA Fisheries and with the help of the Pacific Fishery Management Council and the North Pacific Fishery Management Council.

This program is designed to provide reliable and timely data to assist with the monitoring and measuring of the economic performance of the harvesting and processing components of West Coast and Alaska fisheries. This information is used in analyzing the economic effects of present and future management decisions on these fisheries and fishing communities.

Each year the principal focus of this data collection program will be on a different set of fisheries or on a different set of participants in these fisheries.

We have established a web site which will act as a central repository for information related to this project including the survey instruments used, summary results of surveys, datasets of use to fisheries economists and a database of fisheries economic resources/publications.

We have designed a classification scheme for West Coast fishing industry vessels and processors based upon such items as home port, current and historical participation by species, various vessel features, permit ownership, and/or geographical range of landings.

We have conducted surveys for West Coast open party and charter recreational fishing vessels. This economic survey consisted of a single interview that collected information on annual costs and vessel characteristics. An important element of this survey was to determine how cost structures differed between multi-vessel and single vessel operations, which are crucial in developing a financial profile of CPFV's (Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessel). Vessel characteristics helped identify factors that affected costs as well as the types of activities vessels undertook.

We have also done an "Alaska Sportfishing Charter Operator Survey". The purpose of this survey was to provide information about the economic performance and significance of the halibut charter fleet. The survey provided baseline-data to evaluate some of the economic effects of management proposals, such as IFQ and GHL.

In 1999, we did a "West Coast Cost, Earnings and Employment Survey of the Groundfish Trawl Fleet". The purpose of this survey was to:
• Evaluate the economic benefits from West Coast commercial fisheries; and
• Assess the economic health of the fisheries; and
• Estimate the economic impact of present and future management decisions on the fishery and fishing communities.

We also did a "West Coast On-Shore Groundfish Processors Cost, Earnings and Employment Survey" and an "Alaska Cost, Earnings and Employment Survey". This survey was designed to collect information on individual plants that processed groundfish.

The Regional Mark Processing Center (RMPC)
The Regional Mark Processing Center provides essential services to international, state, federal, and tribal fisheries organizations involved in marking anadromous salmonids throughout the Pacific region. These services include coordination of some tagging and fin marking programs, maintenance of databases for Coded Wire Tag (CWT) releases and recoveries, International Archive of Thermally Marked Otoliths (IATMO) images of releases, Catch and Effort (C&E) data, and dissemination of reports of these data by request in electronic or printed form. These databases are known collectively as the Regional Mark Information System (RMIS).

The RMPC undertakes the design, development, implementation, and on-going evaluation of the central database for the storage and retrieval of coast-wide CWT and related fisheries information. The RMPC validates multi-agency submission of CWT release, recovery and related data used for Pacific salmon and steelhead research studies and harvest management. This includes managing the data exchange specification, correcting data errors, generating reports, and distributing documentation.

The RMPC assists the Pacific Salmon Commission's Working Group on data in the development of CWT data exchange formats. In addition, it provides the coast-wide user community with current and updated CWT data format specifications following any revisions made by that Working Group.

The RMPC also provides technical support for the Regional Committee on Anadromous Marking and Tagging by annually reporting on the status of CWT datasets and data center operations, and by providing incidental technical support as requested by members of the committee.

AREAS OF CONCERN

On the West Coast, Groundfish covered by the Pacific Fisheries Management Council includes 82 different species. These species are managed through a number of measures including harvest guidelines, quotas, trip and landing limits, area restrictions, seasonal closures, and gear restrictions. Currently all sections of

the groundfish fishery area constrained by the need to rebuild groundfish species that have been declared over fished. The Pacific Fishery Management Council has rebuilding plans adopted for Bocaccio, Cowcod, Widow and Yelloweye Rockfish.

Because of the overall low biomass of some species this has led to a significant reduction in the fishery. This has also resulted in a greater need to have timely and accurate information on both commercial and recreational catch.

The PacFIN Data Base which is the primary source of information on the commercial fishery has been level funded for the last seven (7) years. The PacFIN appropriation is $3.0 million -- $850,000 of this appropriation goes to the Western Pacific which leaves about $2.0 million, which is $500,000 short of what is needed for the West Coast.

We have serious concerns relative to being able to maintain our port sampling capabilities. We have lost all of the port samplers in Southern California and may lose some in Washington and Oregon. Costs have gone up and so has the need for catch information. Reduced fisheries do not result in reducing the need for tracking catch and effort data.

In Alaska , the PSMFC is working with the State and NOAA Fisheries to initiate an electronic fish ticket program. We will be talking to a number of the processors and the states on the West Coast to see if an electronic fish ticket program could be used on the West Coast.

In a report by the National Research Council titled; “Improving the Collection, Management and Use of Marine Fisheries Data” it was recognized that it is difficult to monitor in-season catch because of the nature of recreational fisheries.

On the West Coast and especially in California, recreational fishing has had extensive area closures and restrictive management measures placed on them. These management measures were often a result of the effort data generated by the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS). While this survey system was never expected to manage in-season, it was considered by the Pacific Council as the “best available information”.

In 2003, after a considerable amount of frustration and the addition of $1 million, which was specifically requested by Representative “Duke” Cunningham to improve California Recreational data, a new program was designed.

This program includes integration and expansion of sampling to produce better estimates for groundfish. It also includes an estimating effort that relies on methods with good precision, public acceptance which will generate catch estimates within a month after harvest.

It was recognized by all on the West Coast and by Dr. William Hogarth that we could not continue to manage recreational fisheries using MRFSS data as the best available data. It is critically important to have a system that provides a statistically sound framework but also has acceptance by the users and the public.